

In recent Sunday morning worship services, we have seen God's Covenant of Grace acted out in the sacrament of baptism. How fitting, then, that we focus upon our great Covenant Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. In these notes, we will remind ourselves of what it means to have Christ as our Mediator and what blessings flow to us because of His Mediatorial work. Let's start with the Shorter Catechism's definition of these great terms of our salvation, quoting Q & A 20-21 as follows, highlighting important words in **bold**.

Q. 20. *Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

A. God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, **did enter into a covenant of grace**, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a **Redeemer**.

Q. 21. *Who is the redeemer of God's elect?*

A. The only **Redeemer** of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

It is because of this mighty Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, that the church of all ages has the great privilege of worship, offering joyfully the fruit of our lips as we confess the Name of God and His worthiness to be praised (Hebrews 13:15). We praise Him because He has condescended to our level by means of Covenant, making with us the Covenant of Grace, whereby He freely offers to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ" (Westminster Conf of Faith chap. VII: III).

Such worship and Christian service, in Hebrews 13's full description of a living and healthy church, is of course only possible through the Lord Jesus Christ as "the Only Mediator Between God and Man" (1 Timothy 2:5). Let us explore this great doctrine of the Mediation of Jesus Christ, by whose blood we are given access by faith to all the blessings of real, saving fellowship with God.

Mon/Tues: Read Hebrews 13:10-15

Priceless Covenant Treasure

We begin with the basic privilege that is ours because Christ is our Mediator:

The Head and Savior of His church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: unto Whom God did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Westminster Confession of Faith VIII: I

In other words, the importance of God's covenant grace to us as His people is to be measured by the stature of the Mediator who God the Father has given to us. He is the Divine God-Man. He is the Colossus who stands over all of history. Because God's covenant of Grace is inviolable, and so God is determined to make peace by covenant blood with us as His elect people. He sent His Son to "bridge the gap" between us in our lostness and God in His glory.

God's covenant of grace, freely given to us through the Lord Jesus Christ, is the foundation of all our fellowship with God, and of the key to the very survival of the church. See how important the blood of this covenant is in describing and enlivening the blessings which we as Christ's church enjoy:

- 1) Hebrews 13:20: The blessing of peace comes only through "the blood of the everlasting covenant."
- 2) Hebrews 13:21: The blessing of being "equipped for every good work" in order to live a life "pleasing to God" comes only "through Jesus Christ" and through His blood purchasing the good works of the Christian life we are ordained to live (Ephesians 2:10).
- 3) Hebrews 13:9-10: The blessing of being nourished at Christ's altar by the food of God's kingdom comes to us, though at the same time we by faith "go to Christ outside the city walls, bearing His reproach."
- 4) That Cross becomes the place where we live our lives. As we die with Christ to ourselves, we gain spiritual life for today and eternal life forever.

Meditate and Pray: The Cross becomes the place of access into the life of blessing and joy which God has planned for us. Sing about the life which flows to us from this Cross in the following two hymns from the Trinity Hymnal:

(# 708, Red Trinity)

1 O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.

2 O Light that follow'st all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;
my heart restores its borrowed ray,
that in thy sunshine's blaze its day
may brighter, fairer be.

3 O Joy that seekest me through pain
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain
that morn shall tearless be.

**4 O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be.**

(# 185 Blue Trinity)

1 By the cross of Jesus standing,
Love our straitened souls expanding,
Taste we now the peace and grace!
Health from yonder tree is flowing,
Heav'nly light is on it glowing,
From the blessed Sufferer's face.

2 Here is pardon's pledge and token,
Guilt's strong chain for ever broken,
Righteous peace securely made;
Brightens now the brow once shaded,
Freshens now the face once faded,
Peace with God now makes us glad.

3 All the love of God is yonder,
 Love above all thought and wonder,
 Perfect love that casts out fear!
 Strength, like dew, is here distilling,
 Glorious life our souls is filling,
 Life eternal, only here!

4 Here the living water welleteth;
 Here the Rock, now smitten, telleth
 Of salvation freely giv'n:
 This the fount of love and pity,
 This the pathway to the city,
 This the very gate of heav'n.

Weds/Thurs/Fri: Read Hebrews 13:10-15 & Hebrews 9:15-22

The Cross and the Altar

The Cross is both the *access-point* for the believer into the very life-giving presence of God and also *the rock of offense* for those who reject the humiliating picture of God the Creator's Son hanging on a Tree for our sins.

This is why Hebrews 13:13 speaks about the reproach from the world that we will bear when we choose to identify with a Crucified Savior. But such a reproach is a small price to pay compared to the abundant riches of life that flow to us when we are connected by faith to the Savior who died and rose again.

That Cross (though the world is offended by this reality) becomes for us who feed on Christ by faith the very table of our King. We are honored guests at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Though the world scoffs at our making much of Christ's Cross, we find protection, refuge and rich spiritual food there. That Cross becomes the Altar where we eat by faith!

Take time to examine these Bible examples life provided at the place of God's sacrifice for sin:

- 1) Exodus 24:1-11. Here Moses as mediator had gone up the mountain to receive the Words of God. He then read them aloud to God's people, young and old. He then sprinkled the whole assembly with sacrificial blood (Exodus 24:6-8) as a picture of God's people being joined to God by virtue of that covenant blood. Note that this assembly would have included the "little ones" as it did when Joshua repeated this ceremony in Joshua 8:32-35 after offering burnt offerings and peace offerings.
- 2) In this ceremony, the people of God were "baptized into Moses" (1 Corinthians 10:2), but not by water, for they walked with Moses through a dry seabed in the exodus. By Covenant, sacrificial blood, Moses became their mediator who sprinkled the blood of sacrifice both on the Altar (representing God) and on the people themselves (representing their being "sanctified" or "set apart" by the blood of the eternal covenant).
- 3) In the same way, Jesus Christ, our greater Mediator, after his sacrifice on the Cross sprinkles the blood of His sacrifice on the Altar in the Heavenly Holy of Holies, providing us with forgiveness by His blood objectively before God (Hebrews 9:11-15).
- 4) Christ, like Moses before Him, applies the blood of His sacrifice to God's people by sprinkling them in Hebrews 9:18-24.
- 5) Thus God's people, young and old, are set apart by the blood of Christ's sacrifice and can eat together with Jesus Christ, their High Priest, just as Israel of old ate with their priests around the altar of sacrifice.

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

Hebrews 13:12-14

Meditate and Pray: May we above all rejoice, knowing that by the sacrament of baptism, Christ puts the Triune Name of God on us, marking us out for protection as members of His flock. May we also celebrate with thankful remembrance as we partake of His sacrifice at the Lord's Supper.

Oh, may the Lord give us great joy as we gather around His table to enjoy the good things of the Kingdom of God. May the sacraments of Christ become for us real food and real life, as in faith we partake of Christ's sacrificial and sanctifying work.

Sat/Sun: Read Hebrews 12:28-13:6 & Judges 2:16-23

Who is a Pardoning God like Thee?

In the face of all the wonderful promises that flow to us from the Covenant of God's grace, we may ask the question: What about those who spurn the Name of God that was placed on them at baptism? What about those who depart from God's Word and neglect the commands of His Covenant of Grace? Are we to conclude that the means of God's grace in His Word, the Sacraments and Prayer have failed?

This is a vexing question which both paedobaptists and credobaptists feel keenly when an adult turns away from his believer's baptism or a covenant child away from his infant baptism. We will conclude this week by giving thanks that the LORD is faithful to His Covenant commitments even when we fail to keep ours.

Consider the generation that succeeded Joshua and Caleb in the Promised Land. As soon as that generation of heroes died, "there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that He had done for Israel" (Judges 2:10).

As the historical example of the faith of Joshua faded in their memories, they began to enjoy the blessings of the Promised Land, forgetful of God who have all good things. They did "evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals" (Judges 2:11). In short, "they broke God's covenant and did not listen to His voice" (Judges 2:20).

Well, then, what would you do in God's place? God had freely given all the blessings of the "land flowing with milk and honey," safety throughout the forty years in the desert; their sandals and clothes did not wear out! God guarded them with the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night! They had all the covenant promises of the LORD, all the written testimony of the Law of Moses, the sacrificial system as a symbol daily forgiveness, the Spirit of God as the One who joined them by faith to the LORD through sacrificial blood. All this! And they threw it away to serve the Baals. What would we do, in God's place?

But God is not like us. because His Covenant of Grace is by nature (as our Confession of Faith puts it) a Covenant "freely offering sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ," He does not abandon His Covenant obligations *even though we have abandoned ours*.

Do you want proof? Look at God's response in Judges 2:21-23. Yes, He removes the blessings of His covenant or the benefits which in this life do normally flow from His saving grace. But He does not remove His chastising love. He promises in His Covenant both blessings and curses. And when His people walk away, He brings upon them the curses of disobedience. He chastises and tests them by causing the Canaanites to remain in

the Land as a thorn in Israel's side. More than that – what does God do as His final solution and His final answer to His own people's unfaithfulness? He provides the blood of His own Son to be the price to pay for His people's redemption. He Himself, through His Son, pays for His own people's disobedience!

That is why it is called the Covenant of Grace!

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks for the blessing of having a God who does not abandon the terms of His covenant. Most important, give thanks that Christ fulfills the terms of His Covenant on our behalf. He takes our verdict of guilty on Himself; He takes the punishment due to us; He heals us by taking our scourges upon Himself; He takes the bitter grief of the Curse of God against our sin on Himself on the Cross so that we may go to Him outside the gate. Instead of finding sadness and anguish at Christ's Cross, we are able to offer up the fruit of joyful lips that praise God's Name for the gift of His Son's sacrifice on the Cross (Hebrews 13:13-15).

Sing about the joy that is ours when we take refuge at the Cross and when we by faith are joined to Christ forever as our Lamb and Resurrected Shepherd.

(# 251 red Trinity)

1 Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand,
the shadow of a mighty Rock
within a weary land;
a home within the wilderness,
a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noon-tide heat
and the burden of the day.

2 Upon the cross of Jesus
mine eye at times can see
the very dying form of One
who suffered there for me:
and from my stricken heart with tears
two wonders I confess,
the wonders of redeeming love
and my unworthiness.

3 I take, O cross, thy shadow
for my abiding place:
I ask no other sunshine than
the sunshine of his face;
content to let the world go by,
to know no gain nor loss;
my sinful self my only shame,
my glory all the cross.

(# 258, red Trinity)

1 Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
which before the cross I spend,
life and health and peace possessing
from the sinner's dying Friend.

3. Here I find the dawn of heaven
while upon the cross I gaze,
see my trespasses forgiven,
and my songs of triumph raise.

2 Here I rest, in wonder viewing
all my sins on Jesus laid,
here I see redemption flowing
from the sacrifice he made.

4 O that near the cross abiding,
I may to the Savior cleave,
naught with him my heart dividing,
all for him content to leave.